

Homily: 16<sup>th</sup> Sunday: Cycle B: 2012: Jer 23: 1-6; Ps. 23; Eph 2: 13-18; Mk 6:30-34

“How do we experience the gift of the Lord’s peace in our lives?”

1. St. Paul speaks about peace in the second reading today. What is it? **Peace** in the Scriptural and Catholic understanding is not simply the absence of conflict, which is a part of peace that is so needed, witness the fighting in the Middle East, e.g., Syria, and other places in the world, which we should pray for every day; but the deepest meaning of peace is the tranquility of order, or being made right in the depths of our souls with God: *living in harmony with the Lord*. **How does this come about?** By inviting the Lord to live His life in us, the sacred mysteries of His Passion, Death and Resurrection, in which He won the victory over the disorder and lack of peace caused by **satan** and the other fallen angels, by **sin**: original and actual, and by **death** in the world at large and in individual lives. He wants to win that same victory in our individual lives, by His grace - if we allow Him to work over time.
2. A major help in bringing this peace about is what Jesus recommends today in the Gospel to the Apostles and invites us to do the same: *to come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while*. To make a little retreat, to take a little vacation. We all need a rest now and then from our daily occupations and normal routine, especially if we are under a lot of stress in our lives. We need time to re-charge our spiritual batteries, so that we can then go back to our daily duties refreshed and renewed with a new perspective on life, in the Lord. This is why the Church so highly recommends making **a spiritual retreat** periodically. In fact the priests of the Church are required by canon law to take a 5 day retreat every year to help us grow closer to the Lord, so we can help the lay faithful hopefully draw closer to the Lord in our sacred ministry. There are some nice places nearby if you ever want to do a formal retreat: *St. Vincent’s in Latrobe, St. Emma’s in Greensburg, or here at our own retreat house: St. John’s in New Baltimore*: I will be giving a weekend retreat in September and in November: more information will be in the bulletin over time. **Vacations** too, even if they are not exclusively spiritual, can also help us to be renewed in the Lord. *In pondering the beauty of the ocean, or the mountains, or the forest, this can remind us of God’s beauty and love and peacefulness.* God truly uses

the beauty of creation - if we are open to Him to fill our hearts with an inner peace, calm and perspective that can really help us to do better and live better when we return to the busyness of our daily lives.

3. Retreats and vacations are also opportunities to help us renew our good resolutions to follow the Lord more faithfully in daily life: to turn away from sin and selfishness and to open our hearts and minds more deeply to His will and presence in our souls. For this to happen however, we must always strive to include God in the midst of our time away from the burdens of daily life. A vacation should never be a vacation from God and His will. We must plan it out to make sure if we are away on a week-end to get to Mass at the nearest Catholic Church. This is why I always put a reminder in my bulletin column in the summer about [www.masstimes.org](http://www.masstimes.org): 1-800-MASS-TIMES, which can locate the nearest Catholic Church for you and your family members when on vacation. Each Sunday also can be, if we make it that in the Lord, a mini-retreat, a day to spend in prayer and relaxation, so that we can be recreated in the Lord for the other 6 days of the week. Don't squander the gift of Sunday, which so many in our culture tragically do - just seeing it as another day of the week. Also **each of us**, whether we fully realize it or not, **needs a day a month or a few hours a week** to just spend in quiet with the Lord. I remember a priest saying that to me when he heard that I was a pastor to remind my people of this truth. This is something husbands and wives should be sensitive to, especially if you still have children at home who can be quite demanding on your time and energy many levels, as you well know. Work it out so that each of you can have some time regularly to relax, to pray, to go to Confession, or to go on a spiritual retreat periodically. In order to grow in holiness all of us need special times to be with God, to allow Him to renew us and show us how to be more like Jesus in all that we say, and think, and do. As Jesus says elsewhere in the Gospel, *"Come to me, all of you who are weary and find life burdensome; I will refresh you, for my yoke is easy and my burden light."* May we all find that inner peace that all of us are searching for, and may we discover it in deeper union with the Lord, for as St. Augustine famously said in his *Confessions*, *"Our hearts were made by You O' Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You."* God bless you.